

# Horatio Lord Nelson's Warfighting Style and the Maneuver Warfare Paradigm

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For the last 20 years or so, students of land warfare have come increasingly to see the warfighting style called Maneuver Warfare as the apex of military theory. The United States Marine Corps, which has formally embraced this style as doctrine, succinctly defines it as:

a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.<sup>1</sup>

Proponents of this style call themselves maneuverists. They argue that adoption of the 'package' of components integral to Maneuver Warfare will greatly enhance combat effectiveness to the degree that smaller maneuverist land forces can even engage and defeat far larger forces that adhere to less sophisticated doctrines or behavioural patterns. Maneuverists claim that the components in their package – reconnaissance pull, the application of strength against weakness, decentralised command, focal points of effort, maneuver, tempo and the aim of achieving victory by collapsing the enemy's cohesion and morale – are not in themselves new to warfighting, but are the long-established habits of successful commanders.

Yet, while maneuverists also claim that the combination of all these components occurred in many battles or campaigns throughout the ages, and brought dazzling results (both specious claims, according to other commentators<sup>2</sup>), they provide examples mainly from the twentieth century and, more important, *only from land warfare*. The two standard works on Maneuver Warfare,<sup>3</sup> products of the early 1990s when this

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warfighting style soared in popularity after its claimed use in the Persian Gulf War, provide no examples from, and few references to, the rich treasure chest of naval history.

It is the same with the articles on Maneuver Warfare now appearing in military journals. They focus overwhelmingly on land campaigns and battles, with the few exceptions demonstrating that certain airpower and joint campaigns – such as those conducted by Hitler's Wehrmacht or the Israeli Defense Forces – also reveal the prowess of well applied Maneuver Warfare. Readers seeking to analyse Maneuver Warfare's applicability to combat on the seas that cover most of the globe can be forgiven for noticing the absence of scholarly interest in this theme and thinking that, in short, Maneuver Warfare must have no applicability at sea.

One can, however, easily find many fine examples of what is now called Maneuver Warfare in seapower's long history. This article draws from one such example – splendidly manifest in the person of Britain's greatest fighting seaman, Vice-Admiral Horatio, Lord Nelson (1758–1805) – to demonstrate that students of maneuver need not fear turning their attention occasionally from land battles towards those fought at sea. They may indeed be greatly enriched by doing so.

While being mindful to avoid anachronism (Maneuver Warfare's conceptual framework, after all, is very recent), this article shows that Lord Nelson's warfighting style closely *resembles* the modern Maneuver Warfare paradigm. He was not fighting according to *any* paradigm, of course, much less one that dates from almost 200 years after his death. He understood naval tactics and battle according to the norms and behavioural patterns of his own era and continuously experimented and tested ideas, rejecting some, keeping others.

The article naturally makes no claim that Nelson's warfighting style was unique among sea warriors or that he contributed disproportionately to conceptual or doctrinal developments in tactics or operational art. Even a cursory glance at the careers of John Paul Jones, Edward Hawke and John Jervis (one of Nelson's mentors), to mention but a few, reveals that their names fit almost as aptly as Nelson's alongside Napoleon Bonaparte's, Erwin Rommel's and George S. Patton's in studies of effective maneuverists. Yet Lord Nelson makes an ideal focus for a case study of Maneuver Warfare at sea. Extant sources pertaining to his fascinating life are unusually abundant and reveal that he raised the art of war at sea to unsurpassed heights, all the while perfecting the highly maneuverist warfighting style that gave him victory in several of naval history's grandest battles.

## I

Maneuverists place much emphasis on what they term 'reconnaissance pull', by which they mean that attacks should move in directions identified by forward reconnaissance units, not by commanders in the rear who want to push their forces forward along pre-selected routes. Ideally, reconnaissance units should not only find the enemy, but also probe for undefended or lightly defended 'gaps' in the enemy line (or 'surface') that lead to the enemy rear.<sup>4</sup> Then the whole force should, upon orders from forward unit commanders, follow the 'pull' of the reconnaissance units and stream through the gaps to achieve one or more penetrations and hopefully a breakthrough.

The aim of reconnaissance pull is to transfer some decision-making authority to forward commanders, who purportedly have a clearer and more immediate picture of enemy strengths, dispositions and morale than senior commanders at the rear. It is also to ensure that one's strength is not directed at opposing strength, but at weakness.<sup>5</sup> This concept of avoiding or bypassing points of strong resistance to attack critical weaknesses, a central tenet of contemporary Maneuver Warfare, emerged as a popular theme from the writings of British military commentator Sir Basil Liddell Hart in the years immediately before and after World War II. It represents a clear departure from traditional 'Clausewitzian' military thought. Major General Carl von Clausewitz, the great Prussian philosopher of warfare, writing in the 1820s, had explicitly advised that the most effective target for any blows is found where the enemy's mass is concentrated most densely.<sup>6</sup> Clausewitz was not advocating inept, bloody frontal assaults against this concentrated mass, of course; merely that decision ultimately rests upon the destruction or neutralisation of that mass so that, logically, the primary aim of combat is to achieve that destruction or neutralisation through aggressive and highly skilful attacks against the enemy's mass.

Nonetheless, following Liddell Hart's advice and ignoring Clausewitz's, maneuverists now argue that it makes more sense to avoid attacking mass and, following the tactics of surfaces and gaps, to maneuver around strength in order to attack those shaky, weak parts of the enemy upon which he is critically reliant. Doing so, they say, offers no promise of bloodless combat, 'but it does offer less bloody war than a head-on bash directly into the enemy's strength'.<sup>7</sup>

This maneuverist emphasis on reconnaissance pull, with information and decisions flowing upward as well as downward in the chain of authority, and the application of strength against weakness, with strength-on-strength clashes avoided in favour of attacks on enemy vulnerabilities, will doubtless create a happy resonance in the minds of those who have

studied Lord Nelson's fighting style. They will see many similarities between what he and other successful naval commanders were doing and what is now extolled as 'best practice'.

Nelson always relied heavily on his reconnaissance elements, and insisted on maintaining the greatest degree of tactical and operational flexibility so that he could respond immediately to circumstances revealed by those elements. This is not to suggest that the conduct of reconnaissance at sea is the same as it is on land. At sea opposing fleets or squadrons spend most of their time out of direct contact with each other, whereas opposing land forces are routinely in direct contact or close proximity, even when not actually in combat. This creates different battlespace dynamics, and places different obligations on reconnaissance assets. At sea far more effort is devoted to finding the enemy, whose location and direction are constantly changing (unless its vessels are riding at anchor), than on land, where the location of the enemy is usually known, even if its strength, disposition and plans are not. Yet this does not negate the fact that fleets have always devoted as much effort to attaining battlespace awareness as army formations have. And Nelson, like other great admirals, routinely allowed the flow of intelligence from his reconnaissance vessels to shape his campaigns and determine his tactics.

Since the mid-1700s, frigates – single-gundeck warships that functioned as scouts and convoy escort vessels due to their speed being several knots faster than larger ships of the line – bore the lion's share of all naval reconnaissance responsibilities.<sup>8</sup> Nimble yet well armed for their size, frigates served as the 'eyes' of fleets and detached squadrons, trying to locate the enemy, establish his strength, dispositions and direction of movement and then report that information with all speed to larger fleet units. Nelson himself, although not uniquely, referred to frigates as his 'eyes' at sea. 'I am most exceedingly anxious for more eyes', he complained to the Secretary of State for War and Colonies shortly before the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805, 'and hope the Admiralty are hastening them to me. The last [enemy] Fleet was lost to me for want of Frigates; God forbid this should.'<sup>9</sup>

A lack of 'eyes' had long plagued Nelson's efforts to bring the enemy to battle in advantageous circumstances. A full seven years before Trafalgar, but only a week after his stunning victory at the Battle of the Nile, Nelson had written to the First Lord of the Admiralty Earl Spencer: 'My Lord, Was I to die this moment, "Want of Frigates" would be found stamped on my heart. ... [I] am suffering for want of them.'<sup>10</sup>

Nelson used his reconnaissance elements to draw him into contact with the enemy, and also relied on them to help shape particular tactics for

employment once contact had been made. This did not involve frigates only, but any other vessels – including larger warships – which could probe the enemy line for weaknesses to exploit. Although the maneuverist concept of surfaces and gaps seems applicable only to linear formations in land battles, it does have relevance at sea, even in a slightly different form. A line of warships (in the age of sail fleets or squadrons formed into lines before joining battle) still had points of strength and weakness, dictated not only by the positions of certain warships in the line, but also by tides, winds, currents and the shape and proximity of nearby coastlines.

Early in the afternoon of 1 August 1798, for instance, the masthead lookout in one of Nelson's scouting ships sighted Napoleon Bonaparte's powerful fleet anchored in compact order of battle in Aboukir Bay, Egypt, thus ending Nelson's two-month hunt throughout virtually the entire Mediterranean Sea. By the time Nelson's 15-strong fleet closed on the French and formed its own line of battle it was almost 5.30p.m. and darkness was fast approaching. Few naval battles had ever occurred at night and the French commander, Vice-Admiral François Paul, Comte de Brueys d'Aigalliers, doubtless assumed that any reasonable foe would wait until morning to launch an attack rather than risk a night battle on an unfamiliar coast, which could result in 'friendly fire' incidents and groundings on dangerous shoals.

Brueys had long anticipated an attack and had deployed his 13 battleships and six lesser vessels, slightly stronger than Nelson's in overall strength and firepower, with the possibility of a defensive battle in mind. He anchored his ships close to the shore in line of battle, with the head of the line close to shoals and a battery on an islet and with gaps of perhaps 160 yards between each ship. Given common winds, the shape of the bay and the shoals near the head of the line, Brueys presumed that the British would enter the bay in a traditional line of battle, sail from the tail of his own line towards the van (the ships at the head) and bring his vessels under fire in sequence. With this in mind, Brueys had placed his strongest ships in the rear and centre, believing that Nelson's ships would face devastating fire as they attempted to pass alongside them toward the van.

Nelson was unorthodox, however, and had an unusually quick and agile mind. 'Without much previous preparation or plan', one of his closest friends recalled, he had 'the faculty of discovering advantages as they arise, and the good judgement to turn them to his use'.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Nelson quickly identified the major gap in Brueys's surfaces (to use maneuverist parlance) which was the short stretch of water between *Le Guerrier*, a 74-gun ship at the head of the French line, and the nearest shoal. The French ships rode on single anchors, Nelson had noticed,

which logically meant that if there was room for the ships to swing on single anchors, there should be room for some of his own ships to pass around the head of the French line, hard up against the shoals, and to sail down the landward side.<sup>12</sup>

There, Nelson presumed, lay the enemy's critical vulnerability (to use maneuverist jargon again): unmanned or unprepared guns, leaving no real means of opposing an attack from the port (landward) side. Expecting to face the British sailing along the starboard (outward) side of his ships, Brueys would naturally have all his starboard guns and crews ready and waiting, but not anticipating any attack from inshore, his port guns would probably be unprepared for action. This would allow British ships sailing along the port side of the French to fire at will while receiving, at least initially, relatively little return fire. It would also allow them to 'double' (attack vessels from both sides simultaneously) several ships in the van.

There is still much debate among 'Nelsonians' about whether Nelson specifically ordered one or more of his captains to squeeze through the gap between Brueys's van and the shoals, or whether they made the attempt on their own initiative while aware that the daring maneuver matched their commander's intent and would, therefore, meet with his approval.<sup>13</sup> The current writer is persuaded by the evidence that Nelson initiated the bold move by hailing Captain Samuel Hood of the *Zealous* and asking whether his ship could pass inshore of the French.<sup>14</sup> This initiated a friendly race between the *Zealous* and Captain Thomas Foley's *Goliath* as they jockeyed to be first to get inshore of the French in order to move along the port side that would surely be ill defended.

Yet even if this view is wrong, and the initiative came from Foley, as some writers insist, the move is still a splendid early example of the Maneuver Warfare concepts of surfaces and gaps and the application of strength against weakness, as well as with another important maneuverist concept to be explained below: a form of decentralised command called Directive Control. And even if Foley initiated the move, Nelson also deserves credit. During the frustrating two-month chase through the Mediterranean he had regularly assembled his captains and other senior officers on his flagship and explained to them his intentions as well as detailed tactical suggestions for attaining them regardless of whatever particular circumstances prevailed when the enemy was located. Equally important, he also encouraged them never to fear using initiative by acting without orders as circumstances demanded. As one writer observed: 'It was Foley's genius that he spotted the weakness. It was Nelson's genius that his captain felt secure enough in the admiral's trust to exploit the opportunity.'<sup>15</sup>

Four of Nelson's ships were able to pass inshore of the French line, and a fifth passed between the first and second ships to join them. The rest completed the envelopment by sailing down the outer side of the enemy, from the van towards the rear. Thus, with British ships engaging the French van and centre first and moving steadily down the line towards the rear, with the wind behind them, they were able to attack the weakest French ships while the strong French rear was unable to come to their rescue. This is a fine historical example of the maneuverist concept of pitting strength against weakness. And it worked marvellously. As Nelson's ships came up they anchored in succession next to French ships, so that 13 were soon engaging 8 French, and from positions of great advantage. Their concentrated firepower proved overwhelming, especially given that the British rate of fire almost doubled that of the less expert French, forcing the French ships to strike their colours one by one.

They then turned their attention to the French ships in the rear. Shortly after dawn the last guns stopped firing to reveal a British victory of unimagined totality. Indeed, it was the most devastating naval victory of the eighteenth century. For no ships lost of their own the British had virtually annihilated the French fleet in a matter of 10 hours. Six ships of the line had struck their colours, Brueys's flagship had sunk after a huge explosion ripped her apart and four other ships were grounded on the beach with heavy damage. Only two ships of the line escaped (to be recaptured at a later date anyway). Casualty figures were equally one-sided, to mention only the dead: 218 British and 1,700 French perished.

The Battle of the Nile is a superb early example of the maneuverist concepts of surfaces and gaps and the application of strength against weakness, but it is only one of many examples to be found in Nelson's illustrious career. Before he attained flag rank and commanded his own squadrons and fleets he had already demonstrated on several occasions that he understood these principles. Even when captain of a single ship within a fleet he skillfully attacked far stronger opponents by avoiding their firepower and targeting their weaknesses. Off Genoa on 13 March 1795, for instance, Nelson pulled his 64-gun *Agamemnon* out of the British line and sailed straight for the 84-gun *Ça Ira*, which was being towed by a frigate after suffering damage to her masts during a collision with *Jean Bart*, another French ship of 74 guns.

Supporting *Ça Ira* was the 120-gun *Sans Culotte* (later renamed *L'Orient* and made famous as Brueys's flagship at the Nile) and the *Jean Bart*. Nelson was massively outgunned and would have suffered quick destruction if he fell under the enemy's broadside fire. Undaunted, he sought and immediately found a chink in the enemy's armour: the stern

of *Ça Ira*, which, being towed, was less maneuverable than usual. Like all ships of the line, *Ça Ira*'s stern had few guns and was highly vulnerable to attack. With skill and courage (he later told his wife that 'a brave man runs no more risk than a coward'<sup>16</sup>), Nelson tacked the *Agamemnon* up under the rear of the heavily-armed Frenchman, thus gaining safety from the other French ships, and, at almost point-blank range, fired double-loaded broadsides again and again into her vulnerable stern. For over two hours he maneuvered back and forth behind *Ça Ira*, which he continuously raked while never allowing her to turn her own broadside against him. When *Agamemnon* finally broke off the engagement, with only seven men wounded, 110 Frenchmen lay dead and dying<sup>17</sup> and their ship was, Nelson said, 'a perfect wreck'.<sup>18</sup>

## II

As noted, Nelson's command style before and during the Battle of the Nile is a nice early example of the Maneuver Warfare concept now called Directive Control. Actually, maneuverists use various terms synonymously to denote this form of decentralised command: Directive Control, Mission Tactics and even the German phrase, *Auftragstaktik* (lit. 'task-focused tactics'). Put simply, Directive Control means teaching subordinates mastery of their individual jobs and collective tactics, trusting them to act responsibly and with initiative, telling them *what result is intended* (usually defined as the condition or position you want the enemy to be in after the engagement), then leaving them with the freedom and confidence to determine how best to attain it.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, commanders need to convey their *intent*, telling their trusted subordinates what they want achieved, but not, at least in much detail, the method they must employ to do it. General George S. Patton, Junior, the warrior Nelson resembles most (for his vanity and craving for fame as well as his great flair for battle), expressed it thus: 'Never tell people *how* to do things. Tell them *what* to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.'<sup>20</sup>

Even a superficial reading of Nelson's 35-year naval career, from 12-year-old midshipman to 47-year-old martyr and immortal hero, reveals him as one of military history's greatest and most consistent proponents of what we now call Directive Control.<sup>21</sup> As a young officer learning his 'trade' he was keen to study what had brought success in previous generations to the giants of British seapower, Admirals Lords Hawke and Howe.<sup>22</sup> The then Sir Edward Hawke's victory at Quiberon Bay in 1759, for example, was, despite the limitations of eighteenth century naval



technology and tactics, a splendid example of maneuverist warfighting. It demonstrated to young officers like Nelson just how much could be accomplished with the minimum of direct command and control when subordinate captains were thoroughly familiar with their commander's intent, schooled in appropriate tactics, inspired by the commander's example and trusted by him to use their initiative. Hawke and Nelson actually had a connection; Captain William Locker, one of Nelson's important early mentors, had served with Hawke and come under his influence during his period of famous activity.

Shortly before his own great victory at the Nile Nelson also had the good fortune of serving under Admiral Sir John Jervis, who demanded very high standards from his captains, but, by training and trusting them, achieved excellent results. On 1 December 1796, for instance, Jervis entrusted Nelson with what he knew would be a difficult mission: the evacuation of British forces from Corsica. Jervis's written order is a model of its kind. He stated his intent clearly but simply and then informed Nelson that he should feel at liberty to accomplish it as he saw best. 'Having experienced the most important effects from your enterprise and ability', said Jervis, 'upon various occasions since I have had the honour to command the Mediterranean, *I leave entirely to your judgement* the time and manner of carrying this critical and arduous service into execution.'<sup>23</sup> Needless to say, Nelson lived up to Jervis's expectations.

Jervis's respect for Nelson bore sweet fruit again on 14 February 1797, when the old admiral gained victory in the Battle of Cape St Vincent. This battle firmly proved the worth of trust – both *of* and *from* one's subordinates – and the clear communication of expectations, expressed not only in terms of the results that are wanted but also of the skills, commitment and initiative that each person must possess. Jervis's 15-strong fleet encountered a greatly superior Spanish force off Cape St Vincent in Spain and the admiral immediately ordered its attack, aware that the 27 Spanish vessels were of adequate quality but their crews and commanders were not.

Jervis may have trusted his subordinates, and wanted them to use initiative, but he was nonetheless of an older generation, was accustomed to exercising authority through centralised command, and therefore liked to control his engagements and battles by issuing signals from the flagship.<sup>24</sup> Nelson recognised this, of course, but also knew that the spontaneous circumstances of battle often rendered centralised command ineffective.

During the action off Cape St Vincent, Nelson, then a commodore on board the 74-gun *Captain*, watched with mounting frustration and then

outright angst as circumstances developed beyond Jervis's ability to control them with traditional maneuvers and communications by signals. Nelson saw a fleeting opportunity to cut off several ships in the Spanish van that seemed likely to escape due to slow and complex British maneuvers ordered by Jervis. On his own initiative, but still with Jervis's overall battle objectives in mind,<sup>25</sup> he spontaneously wore the *Captain* from last ship but two out of the British line of battle, passed back through it, and attacked the Spanish van. Even though Nelson knew that Spanish ships were poorly manned and incapable of reaching the British rate of gunfire (and he had long favoured regular tactical drills to make his crews as fast and efficient as possible<sup>26</sup>), his action was still highly courageous. It also directly violated the Fighting Orders that had governed British naval tactics for generations, and occurred without approval from Jervis.

Yet even the conservative old admiral saw its genius and, with the same signal system that had almost allowed his enemy to escape, promptly ordered its reinforcement (a marvellous early example of reconnaissance pull). Nelson's actions secured the victory and earned Jervis's eternal gratitude. Sir Robert Calder, the cautious Flag Captain, later complained to Jervis that Nelson's action was unauthorised, to which the admiral replied: 'It certainly was so ... and if you ever commit such a breach of your orders, I will forgive you also.'<sup>27</sup>

This battle, the Nile and Nelson's one-eyed 1801 disobedience of Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker's signals during the Battle of Copenhagen, when he chose not to break off battle as his less aggressive commander had instructed, made Horatio Nelson a household name in England. More important, these actions reinforced in his mind the great value of imparting to his own subordinates the wealth of tactical and operational knowledge he had spent decades learning, as well as empowering them with confidence that he completely trusted them to act on their own initiative when tactical circumstances dictated.

Five months after the Battle of Cape St Vincent, Admiral Jervis dispatched Nelson, now a Rear-Admiral, with a detached squadron of eight ships to attack the Spanish town of Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the Canary Islands. To ensure that his plans were well understood, Nelson summoned his captains to the *Theseus* for conferences no fewer than four times; once before sailing and again on 17, 20, and 21 July.<sup>28</sup> They discussed the disposition of forces and assets, Nelson's tactical plans and the desired endstate, but Nelson reassured his captains that, as circumstances dictated, they were trusted to use their initiative and would be given considerable tactical latitude. To Captain Thomas Troubridge, for example, who was to lead the forces landed at Santa Cruz, Nelson advised

that he could 'pursue such other methods as you judge most proper for speedily effecting my orders, which are to possess myself of all cargoes and treasures which may be landed in the Island of Teneriffe'.<sup>29</sup>

The attack on Santa Cruz was a miserable failure – the glaring aberration in Nelson's career – and cost him 343 casualties, either killed or wounded, and the loss of his own right arm, amputated after taking a shot above the elbow. Three factors largely outside of Nelson's control – the state of the sea off Santa Cruz during the summer, unfamiliarity with the mountains behind Santa Cruz and the prevailing July heat – caused initial setbacks. But the defeat itself stemmed from Nelson's response to those setbacks: allowing pride to prevail over sound judgement, he made a valiant but ill-considered departure from his usual maneuverist instincts by launching a frontal attack on the enemy's *strongest* point.<sup>30</sup> Although he placed no blame on others, and no-one placed it on him, the defeat at Santa Cruz was a bitter pill for Nelson to swallow.

During both the Battle of the Nile, discussed above, and the Battle of Copenhagen (2 April 1801), Nelson continued to bring his captains and officers into his confidence, brief them fully on his intentions, and convey his trust in their ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances by looking for and making the most of opportunities without waiting for orders. He took communication, training and trust very seriously, and remarked with all honesty after the Nile that, without knowing and trusting his captains, 'he would not have hazarded the attack: that there was little room, but he was sure each would find a hole to creep in at'.<sup>31</sup> Nelson's statements of total trust in his captains can be contrasted with Napoleon's contempt for his marshals. 'These people think they are indispensable', the French emperor harshly claimed. 'They don't know I have a hundred division commanders who can take their place.'<sup>32</sup>

Even during the critical Trafalgar campaign of 1805, when the weight of the British people's faith in him caused him acute anxiety, Nelson never displayed concern at the ability of his commanders, much less treated them with Napoleonic disdain. But then he never shared Napoleon's petty guarding of military knowledge and fear of sharing glory. On the contrary, Nelson wanted his captains to know as much as possible and went to great lengths to pass on his accumulated wisdom. Though he initially knew a minority of the captains in his new command, and realised that not many had ever participated in fleet battle, he immediately took steps to school them in a wide range of tactical options and to familiarise them with the particular plan (the so-called 'Nelson touch'<sup>33</sup>) he intended to execute. In a series of conferences disguised as dinner parties aboard his flagship, he gave tactical lessons that distilled complex maneuvers down to

a level that each captain could understand. One lieutenant in the *Victory* later recalled that 'the frequent communications he [Nelson] had with his Admirals and captains put them in possession of all his plans' and made his intentions known to virtually every officer of the fleet.<sup>34</sup>

Nelson also stressed to them the importance of flexibility. 'Something must be left to chance', he told them in a tactical memorandum of 9 October 1805, 'nothing is sure in a Sea Fight beyond all others.'<sup>35</sup> He added that, if communications became confused during battle, they need not worry unduly because 'no Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an enemy'. There, he knew, the better British rate of fire would really count. To Vice-Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, his second in command, he wrote a marvellous note that so perfectly sums up Directive Control that it deserves to be read by every maneuverist: 'I send you my Plan of Attack', he wrote, 'as far as a man dare venture to guess at the very uncertain position the Enemy may be found in. But, my dear friend, it is [designed only] to place you perfectly at ease respecting my intentions, and to give full scope to your judgement for carrying them into effect.'<sup>36</sup>

### III

Proponents of Maneuver Warfare happily call themselves maneuverists because they believe that skilful and effective maneuvering is the cardinal feature in their warfighting style. By maneuver they mean something more than just the movement of troops. In other words, merely moving reinforcements from rear areas to the front does not constitute maneuver; nor does advancing in linear fashion against an enemy line, *à la* some of Napoleonic land warfare and much of World War I on the Western Front. Maneuverists use the term far more specifically to denote the movement of forces to gain either positional or psychological advantage over the enemy with the aim of seeking his defeat, even if not necessarily his destruction.<sup>37</sup> Inexpert head-to-head clashes of forces, especially in linear formations, is not covered by this definition.

For more than a century before the age of Nelson fleet tactics had been based on the line of battle, which involved fleets or squadrons approaching in long but orderly lines. They engaged each other obliquely or in parallel, with each ship seeking to place itself alongside a similar or weaker opponent. Broadships dominated this linear form of battle, and victory almost always went to the side that possessed the most and fastest guns (usually the better trained British). Yet victory was seldom complete, and usually consisted of the capture or destruction of a small number of enemy vessels (perhaps two or three), while the majority escaped to fight another day.

Nelson was a passionate student of naval tactics.<sup>38</sup> Deeply impressed by the more significant victories gained in the Battle of the Saintes (1782), the Glorious First of June (1794), the Battle of St Vincent (1797) and the Battle of Camperdown (also 1797), he could not help but notice that tactical innovations brought positive results. He consequently developed his own theory of warfighting, one that placed great emphasis on a new type of maneuver: concentrating all his focus and strength on a portion of the enemy's line (usually the most vulnerable section, as noted above), separating it from possible support, defeating it in detail and then dealing with the rest.

This idea is remarkably similar to the Maneuver Warfare concept of the 'Schwerpunkt' (lit. 'heavy point', or focal point), which refers to the concentration of focus, effort and strength at a particular point in space and time. Using all available intelligence as well as reconnaissance pull, the commander should determine the most effective place to direct his effort and forces towards in order to have the maximum effect on the opponent. He should then use skilful maneuver to engage the enemy at that point, ensuring that the strike comes at the most useful time, usually in order to maximise surprise and pre-empt enemy reinforcements.<sup>39</sup> In the Napoleonic period, only two of the famous warriors to emerge in that era stand out as consistent practitioners of this idea: Napoleon and Nelson.

Like Napoleon, Nelson clearly aimed for complete victories, and used maneuver and focal points as vital tools. He conducted some frightfully bold squadron and fleet maneuvers to gain positional advantage over, and concentration against, carefully selected enemy elements. 'I am of the opinion', he once told a cautious senior commander when recommending a daring attack, 'that the boldest measures are the safest; and our Country demands a most vigorous exertion of her force, directed with judgement.'<sup>40</sup> His 'vigorous' maneuvers included the Battles of St Vincent, when he pulled his vessel (and several supporting ships) out of the line without instructions to cut off a Spanish movement; the Battle of the Nile, when he swooped down on the French fleet from the unexpected end of the line and placed ships inside where the French thought they would never sail; and the Battle of Copenhagen, when he sailed along the Danish line from an unexpected direction (up a shallow channel behind a mud bank, where Danish firepower was weakest).

These maneuvers all included great risk, speed, surprise and concentration, as did Nelson's greatest fleet maneuver: his bold but very dangerous two-squadron attack to break the Combined Franco-Spanish line off Cape Trafalgar. Through skilful maneuver he concentrated 27 British ships against 20 of the enemy's and, through British superiority in

ship-to-ship tactics and a faster rate of fire, gained his most impressive victory.

While Nelson rejected the traditional line-ahead approach and maneuvered to gain positional advantage, he also believed that his new tactics – which exploited the elements of speed, surprise and concentration of fire – would greatly enhance the likelihood of attaining the enemy's destruction or collapse because of their *psychological* shock value. In short, he became convinced that his bold attacks would (to quote again from the modern US Marine Corps definition of Maneuver Warfare) 'shatter the enemy's cohesion ... and create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope'.<sup>41</sup>

Collingwood later acknowledged that Nelson's warfighting style simply overwhelmed enemies, who were unable to think of effective responses before it was too late. 'It was indeed a charming thing,' he observed, recalling Nelson's tactics at the Battle of the Nile.<sup>42</sup> 'It was the promptitude, as much as the vigour of the attack, which gave him the superiority so very soon; the Frenchman found himself assailed before he determined how best he should repel the assault.' On another occasion Collingwood recalled that, 'an enemy that commits a false step in his [Nelson's] view is ruined, and it comes on him with an impetuosity that allows him no time to recover'.<sup>43</sup>

Nelson's emphasis on audacious and fast moves designed to confuse and hopefully paralyse enemy commanders (I 'can't bear tame and slow measures,' he once told his wife<sup>44</sup>) is a superb early example of the modern maneuverist concept of 'tempo'. This proffers that 'all actions cause reactions' and the unit or person who acts consistently at a faster pace than the opponent will force him to react defensively and without time to advance his own plans or create adequate responses. This concept is now referred to in military circles by the buzzword 'OODA Loop', which stands for the sequential steps in any rational decision: Observe, Orient, Decide, Act.<sup>45</sup> According to Korean War veteran Colonel John Boyd, who first articulated the concept in terms of its role in warfighting, the person who goes through this series of steps (or 'loop') quicker than his opponent does will be 'inside his decision-cycle' and thus able to prevent him resisting effectively.<sup>46</sup>

It would be anachronistic to say that Nelson understood combat in these terms. He naturally had no idea that he was conducting time-competitive 'OODA Loops' to get inside his enemy's decision-cycle. Yet the general idea is the same: he knew he was hitting the enemy so fast, hard and cunningly that he was rendering him unable to see through the chaos and disorder in time to plan responses. Demanding an immediate

attack that would take the Danes by surprise and rob them of any initiative, he said before the Battle of Copenhagen: 'Let it [the attack] be by the Sound, by the Belt, or anyhow; *only lose not an hour*.'<sup>47</sup> He clearly understood the psychological impact of rapid, audacious or unusual moves. As he explained to a confidant shortly before the Battle of Trafalgar: 'I will tell you what I think of it [the maneuver he planned to use]. I think it will surprise and confound the enemy. They won't know what I am about.'<sup>48</sup>

#### IV

One might think that the remarkable similarities between Nelson's warfighting style and the modern Maneuver Warfare paradigm end once the concept of destruction is analysed. Many biographers of Nelson insist (to quote one) that he 'always sought the annihilation of his enemy', meaning that he aimed for nothing less than the physical destruction of all engaged vessels and, by logical extension, the crews that kept them functioning.<sup>49</sup> This would certainly put him at odds with most modern maneuverists, who argue that one need not destroy the enemy physically if, through applying all the principles of Maneuver Warfare outlined above, one can so wreak havoc with his ability to resist and wage further warfare that he becomes irrelevant as a threat or a restriction on national will. In other words, it is not necessary to *destroy* an enemy to *defeat* him.

A cursory survey of Nelson's words and deeds suggests that he did indeed want to destroy his enemies. After the engagement with the *Ça Ira*, outlined above, he was bitterly disappointed that Vice-Admiral William Hotham had not ordered a pursuit of the French fleet. Fourteen British ships had *captured* only two French, yet Hotham said: 'We must be contented. We have done very well.'<sup>50</sup> Nelson insisted that, had they taken ten ships and allowed the eleventh to escape, he would not have considered the victory total.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, for months after the Battle of the Nile (which established a grim 'record' for its level of destruction and damage inflicted by British warships on an enemy fleet) he regretted that two French ships of the line and two frigates had managed to escape. He took great delight in learning of their eventual capture or damage.

Nelson despised partial measures – 'half a victory would but half content me', he told his friend and prize agent on 6 September 1805<sup>52</sup> – and often used blunt language to describe his intentions. Reassuring the same person three weeks later that he was not depressed by his failure to catch the Combined Fleet, he added: 'my mind is calm, and I have only to think of destroying our inveterate foe'.<sup>53</sup>

The word 'annihilation' had also begun creeping more frequently into his letters and dispatches after the Peace of Amiens collapsed in May 1803 and he realised he would have to defend Britain in a final showdown with Napoleon's fleet. Arriving off Toulon in July 1803 to watch a French fleet within the port, he stated: 'My first object must be to keep the French fleet in check and, if they put to sea, to have force enough with me to *annihilate* them.'<sup>54</sup>

When it appeared in April 1805 that the enemy fleet might be engaged by a British force under Admiral Lord Gardner, Nelson wished him luck and hoped that he would 'annihilate' them.<sup>55</sup> Even during a period of home leave in late August 1805, only seven weeks before Trafalgar, he expressed hope that the Combined Franco-Spanish Fleet, if engaged by another British admiral in his absence, would be 'met with and annihilated'.<sup>56</sup>

And on 5 October 1805, less than three weeks before the climactic battle, he informed Lord Barham, First Lord of the Admiralty, that he hoped more British ships would soon arrive to spoil the plans of the Franco-Spanish force and that, 'as an Enemy's Fleet they may be annihilated'.<sup>57</sup> This was real fighting talk.

The word 'annihilation' is almost identical in meaning and usage to the German word 'Vernichtung' (now often translated as 'extermination', a far more specific and cruel meaning than its earlier rendering as 'destruction') used by the Prussian war philosopher Clausewitz to describe the type of battle best able to deliver total victory. During the Napoleonic period both 'annihilation' and 'Vernichtung' denoted reduction of something to the state of nothing; that is, an object's physical destruction or disintegration. An action that might fit this meaning, for instance, is the grinding of a dense solid into a fine powder by a pharmacist using a mortar and pestle.

Many students of war believe that both Clausewitz and Nelson advocated inflicting the maximum bloodshed on the battlefield; in other words, that they measured success in terms of a friend-foe casualty calculation and considered victory was won by the side that inflicted unsustainable or unbearable losses on the enemy. This interpretation overstates Clausewitz's argument. He did write such bloodthirsty-sounding things as 'Destruction of the enemy's military forces is in reality the object of all combat'<sup>58</sup> and 'What is overcoming the enemy? Always the destruction ['Vernichtung'] of his military force, whether it be by death, or wounds, or any means.'<sup>59</sup>

Yet a careful reading of Clausewitz shows that he never saw blood-letting as the end in itself, merely as a means to the end, and he never said that it was the *only*, or even most desirable means. The objective



Clausewitz advocated was the imposition of one's will over the enemy so that he would cease to threaten safety and interfere with the attainment or continuation of national policies. This could be achieved through a variety of non-military means, particularly diplomacy, but, if battle had to be joined, the desired goal was still not destruction for its own sake or as a measure of victory, but the eradication of the enemy's ability to spread fear, cause harm, or inflict loss of life. In other words, the desired goal of battle was disarming the enemy and rendering him non-functional.<sup>60</sup> 'Destruction', Clausewitz explained, means 'reducing a military force to such a state that it is no longer able to prosecute warfare.'<sup>61</sup>

Lord Nelson's position, it would seem, has been likewise overstated. He never set down his military ideas in a thorough and systematic fashion – and certainly never wrote anything comparable to Clausewitz's masterpiece, *On War* – so scholars have had little alternative but to pick out passages scattered throughout his letters and dispatches and to compare them to the conduct and outcome of his battles. When they do so, they notice that Nelson said certain things that eventually occurred. They logically deduce, therefore, that they happened in their precise manner because Nelson planned them to do so. In other words, if Nelson used certain words to describe a forthcoming battle, and that description matched the actual event, he must not only have chosen his words carefully and with precise meanings in mind, but also resolved to put them into action. According to this logic, Nelson must have really aimed to destroy physically all enemies in each of his major engagements.

It is clear that Nelson aimed for total victory, and in battle showed little concern for resulting enemy deaths ('I hope and believe that some hundreds of French are gone to hell', he told Emma Hamilton after a very unsuccessful raid on Boulogne in August 1801<sup>62</sup>). But that does not mean he desired the enemy's total physical annihilation, despite his frequent rhetoric to this effect after the collapse of the Peace of Amiens in May 1803. He was in fact a remarkably complex mixture of ruthlessness and humanity, who mercilessly unleashed the full power of his forces at the start of battles but, once victory had been attained, usually ended them with an almost paradoxical humanity. Available sources actually indicate that, while he did hope his last big battle with the French would end in a victory surpassing his previous achievements,<sup>63</sup> his thinking was similar to Clausewitz's (and more in keeping with modern maneuverists than previously thought). Nelson saw battle as a means of gaining personal glory (which he always craved) but, much more important, he recognised that the primary function of battle was the removal of all threats to British safety and interests caused by the enemy's forces. This need not be

achieved by total physical destruction and great bloodshed if the enemy's cohesion, morale and will to fight could be otherwise shattered and his forces reduced to irrelevance.

Ships of the line were, in any event, remarkably tough vessels, and their physical destruction through burning or sinking was not easily achieved. Damaging them to the point of combat uselessness or capturing them for prize money and later addition to the British fleet were easier and were usually attempted as a battle objective. Throughout the entire Napoleonic period these actions were also accomplished at a greater rate. This, it seems, is what Nelson, like most of his contemporaries, aimed for as much as he did physical destruction. The result of all these actions – capturing, seriously crippling, forcing aground, burning and sinking – was the removal of enemy ships from any future use in threats, coercion or combat, and that was precisely what Nelson wanted. He saw no real difference in the relative value of these actions (he certainly never expressed greater pleasure in sinking a ship and killing her crew than in capturing them) and considered all these actions 'destruction' if it resulted in ship losses to the enemy.

Throughout late 1804, for instance, Nelson complained bitterly about the many pirates and privateers that interdicted British shipping and caused other problems to his fleet. He informed one of his captains that he wanted the pirates 'kept in pretty good check, and destroyed the moment they attempt to proceed without the protection of neutrality'.<sup>64</sup> Yet he mentioned to another officer his hope that he would soon 'capture or destroy more of those piratical Privateers'.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, when Spain formally sided with France against Britain in November 1804 Nelson instructed his captains and commanders to use their 'utmost endeavour to capture, seize, burn, sink or destroy' any Spanish vessels.<sup>66</sup>

This also applied to fleet actions. Capturing or sinking ships was all the same to Nelson, so long as they were robbed from enemy service and consequently eradicated as a threat and nuisance. On 23 July 1805, for instance, he notified Lord Barham that he had almost caught the enemy fleet in the West Indies and that, even though the outcome of battle 'would have been in the hands of Providence', he humbly believed that 'the Enemy would have been fit for no active service after such a Battle'.<sup>67</sup>

This view of 'destruction' – that it includes the capture and crippling as well as the sinking or wrecking of enemy ships – allows us to make more sense of Nelson's afore-mentioned complaints about Admiral Hotham's failure to pursue the French fleet after the inconclusive engagements in 1795 had resulted in only two French ships captured. Had they taken 10 ships out of 11, Nelson had said, it still would not have

satisfied him. Clearly his word 'taken' does not refer specifically to the physical destruction of vessels, but to their removal from French service through capture, permanent damage or sinking. It is the same with Trafalgar. On the day of battle Nelson asked Captain Henry Blackwood what he would consider a victory, to which the frigate captain replied: 'if 14 ships were captured, it would be a glorious result'.<sup>68</sup> Nelson replied that he would not be satisfied with anything short of 20. Again, this demonstrates that in the great commander's mind the important thing was to rob the enemy of effective naval strength, and this could be accomplished by physical destruction *or* capture.

In fact, if one looks at the Trafalgar campaign of September and October 1805 one does not find Nelson aiming to destroy the same percentage of ships as he had during the Battle of the Nile in August 1798. Then he had captured and destroyed 11 of 13 ships of the line and most frigates and smaller craft (thereby reducing Napoleon's Egyptian fleet by almost 90 per cent).

Even though he often threatened destruction and annihilation and wanted a battle of unsurpassed totality, and never shied away from inflicting a lot of bloodshed, in 1805 he realistically aimed for the level of accomplishment that would secure mastery of the seas for Britain, reassure the British people that their islands were safe<sup>69</sup>, remove the threat of invasion or mischief by Napoleon, and provide security to Britain's allies. He measured this level of accomplishment at 20 enemy ships of the line robbed from Napoleon's fleet of 33<sup>70</sup>, which means that he aimed to reduce (or 'degrade', to use today's jargon) the Combined Fleet by 60 per cent. This was remarkably ambitious (at Trafalgar he was slightly outnumbered, and none of his illustrious predecessors had taken 20 ships in all their battles *put together*) but it does not support the claim, often made by writers, that 'the total destruction of the enemy force' had become the admiral's goal.<sup>71</sup>

As it happened, the British fleet at Trafalgar lost none of its own ships but took or destroyed 19 French and Spanish ships in about six hours. Nelson would have been ecstatic about the safety of his fleet and the destruction of the enemy. 'I would willingly have half of mine burned to affect their destruction', he had claimed during a moment of gloom nine months earlier.<sup>72</sup> This Franco-Spanish destruction rate of 57 per cent may sound highly attritional and make some maneuverists squeamish. Yet one must remember that this refers to ship, *not human*, losses. For only 1,690 casualties of their own, the British killed and wounded 5,860 Frenchmen and Spaniards and took a further 20,000 prisoner. In terms of the numbers present at the battle (over 50,000) and the scale and significance of the

victory gained these are certainly not horrific losses. They compare favourably – almost identically – with the battlefield casualty rate (8 per cent friendly, 20 per cent enemy) achieved by the German Wehrmacht, hailed by modern maneuverists as fine exponents of their warfighting style, during its successful Blitzkrieg campaigns from 1939 to 1941.

And they compare extremely well with the casualty rates of many Napoleonic land battles, which were more attritional than many people think. At Albuera (1811), for example, the British and French both suffered 44 per cent casualties, and at Waterloo (1815), 24 and 35 per cent respectively.<sup>73</sup> In short, although Nelson clearly realised that taking ships inevitably meant killing many crewmen, he was no ‘attritionist’.

### Conclusions

Lord Nelson developed a warfighting style that, given allowances for differences between land and sea environments, is very similar to that now called Maneuver Warfare and hailed by its many advocates as the most intelligent and effective means of waging war at the tactical and operational levels. Nelson saw warfare in the same uncomplicated terms as George S. Patton. ‘War is a very simple thing’, the best Allied maneuverist of World War II said, ‘and the determining characteristics are self-confidence, speed and audacity.’<sup>74</sup> Were Nelson listening from the grave, he doubtless would have replied: ‘Hear, Hear!’

Nelson learned by studying battles fought in previous generations by the naval heroes he idolised, and by experimenting with feelings and ideas given to him by instinct and intuition. His success, he knew, depended on psychological as well as physical attack, and he endeavoured to master both. Endowed with an aggressive spirit and an awareness that partial victories only meant more battles to fight at later stages, he aimed for *total* victory. That does not mean, despite his own bombast, that he aimed for total annihilation. He aimed for what would shatter the enemy’s will to fight, give Britain and its allies safety and freedom to carry out their national policies, and deny the enemy the ability to cause further mischief to them. That meant defeating the enemy, not necessarily destroying him.

Yet, Nelson, a complex mix of ruthlessness and humanity, never flinched from hitting the enemy cunningly and ruthlessly to inflict as much damage and bloodshed as possible for the minimum loss of his own sailors’ lives. He instinctively used virtually all the concepts now extolled by maneuverists – reconnaissance pull, the application of strength against weakness, directive control, focal points of effort, maneuver, tempo and the aim of achieving victory through pre-empting the enemy’s decisions

and shattering his will to fight – to gain the stunning victories that gave his country naval supremacy for a full century. He never knew it in these terms, but a maneuverist Nelson surely was.

## NOTES

1. *MCDP 1: Warfighting* (US Marine Corps 1997) p.73.
2. Cf. Daniel P. Bolger, 'Maneuver Warfare Reconsidered', in Richard D. Hooker Jr (ed.) *Maneuver Warfare: An Anthology* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press 1993) pp.19–41.
3. Hooker, *Maneuver Warfare* (note 2); Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver-Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press 1991). Both authors draw inspiration from the 'grand-daddy' of maneuverist works: Richard E. Simpkin's seminal *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-first Century Warfare* (London: Brassey's 1984). They also refer frequently to another pioneering but less sturdy work: William S. Lind's *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1985). These studies also pay no attention to warfare at sea.
4. Hooker (note 2) p. 10; Leonhard (note 3) p.114.
5. *MCDP 1-3: Tactics* (US Marine Corps 1997) p.30.
6. Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege: Hinterlassenes Werk* Ungekürzter Text (Berlin: Ullstein, 1999 edition. First published in 1832) pp.671–2.
7. Hooker (note 2) p.10.
8. Steven E. Maffeo, *Most Secret and Confidential: Intelligence in the Age of Nelson* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press 2000) pp.91–103.
9. Letter to Viscount Castlereagh, 5 Oct. 1805, in Vice-Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, with Notes by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, GCMG*, 7 vols. (London: Chatham, 1998 reprint edition. First published in 1844–46) [Hereafter cited as DLLN], Volume VII, p.76.
10. Letter to Earl Spencer, 9 Aug. 1798, DLLN, Vol.III, p.98.
11. Rear-Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood to Dr Alexander Carlyle, 24 Aug. 1801, in E. Hughes (ed.) *The Private Correspondence of Admiral Lord Collingwood* (London: Navy Records Society 1957) p.130.
12. Berry's narrative in DLLN, Vol.III, p.50.
13. Several writers believe the bold maneuver was the spontaneous decision of Captain Thomas Foley of the *Goliath*, who moved inside the French fleet without waiting for Nelson's order. See L. Kennedy, *Nelson's Band of Brothers* (London: Odhams 1951) p.128; E. Bradford, *Nelson: The Essential Hero* (London: Macmillan 1977) p.200; L. Foreman and E.B. Phillips, *Napoleon's Lost Fleet: Bonaparte, Nelson and the Battle of the Nile* (London: Discovery Books 1999) pp.123–4.
14. I am especially persuaded by Captain Hood's letter to Lord Bridport shortly after the battle, published in DLLN, Vol. III, pp.63–4. See also G. Bennett, *Nelson the Commander* (NY: Scribner's 1972) p.131; T. Pocock, *Horatio Nelson* (London: Pimlico 1994, orig. 1988) p.163.
15. Foreman and Phillips (note 13) p.124.
16. Nelson's Letter to His Wife, 12 April 1795, in G. Naish (ed.) *Nelson's Letters to His Wife and Other Documents 1785–1831* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul/Navy Records Society 1958) p.206.
17. Nelson's Letter to His Wife, 14 March 1795, *ibid.* p.200.
18. DLLN, Vol.II, p.14.
19. Hooker (note 2) pp.10–13; Leonhard, pp.113–18.
20. G. Patton, *War as I Knew It* (NY: Bantam, 1979 edition. First published 1947) p.338.
21. The best analysis of Nelson's command and control style is undoubtedly found in Michael A. Palmer, 'The Soul's Right Hand: Command and Control in the Age of Fighting Sail, 1652–1827', *The Journal of Military History* 61 (Oct. 1997) pp.679–706.

22. He also made a close study of British naval tactics used against the American colonies during the War of Independence. J.S. Clarke and J. M'Arthur, *The Life of Admiral Lord Nelson, K.B., from His Lordship's Manuscripts* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1810 ed.) p.93.
23. C. White, 1797: *Nelson's Year of Destiny* (Stroud, UK: Sutton/Royal Naval Museum 1998), p.21.
24. A fine study of Jervis's signals during the Battle of Cape St Vincent can be found in M. A. Palmer, 'Sir John's Victory: The Battle of Cape St Vincent Reconsidered', *The Mariner's Mirror* 77/1 (Feb. 1991) pp.31–46.
25. D. King (ed.) *Every Man Will Do His Duty: An Anthology of Firsthand Accounts from the Age of Nelson* (NY: Henry Holt 1997) p.81; DLLN, Vol.II, p.347.
26. Clarke and M'Arthur (note 22), p.101.
27. N. Tracy, *Nelson's Battles: The Art of Victory in the Age of Sail* (London: Chatham 1996) p.97.
28. White, 1797 (note 23) p.105.
29. DLLN, Vol.II, p.417.
30. A. Guimerá, *Nelson and Tenerife 1797* (Shelton: The 1805 Club 1999) p.7. This work and White's are the finest accounts of Nelson's darkest moments.
31. Lady Minto to Lady Malmesbury, 7 Sept. 1800, in *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto from 1751 to 1806, Edited by His Great-Niece the Countess of Minto in Three Volumes* (London: Longmans, Green 1874) Vol.III, p.150.
32. J.C. Herold (ed.) *The Mind of Napoleon: A Selection from His Written and Spoken Words* (NY: Columbia UP 1955) p.218.
33. Letter to Lady Hamilton, 1 Oct. 1805, DLLN, Vol.VII, p.60.
34. Tracy (note 27) p.10.
35. DLLN, Vol.VII, pp.89–92.
36. Letter to Vice-Admiral Collingwood, 9 Oct. 1805, *ibid.* p.95. Collingwood had been a close friend of Nelson since 1778.
37. Hooker (note 2) pp.63, 80, 81; Leonhard (note 2), p.18.
38. J. Thursfield, *Nelson and Other Naval Studies* (London: John Murray 1920) p.16; Letter to William Locker, 25 Feb. 1783, DLLN, Vol.I, p.72.
39. W. Lind, 'Misconceptions of Maneuver Warfare', *Marine Corps Gazette* 72/1 (Jan. 1988), p.17.
40. Letter to Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, 24 March 1801, DLLN, Vol. IV, pp. 297–8.
41. *MCDP 1: Warfighting* (US Marine Corps 1997) p.73.
42. Hughes (note 11) p.92.
43. *Ibid.* p.130.
44. Letter to Fanny Nelson, 1 April 1795, in Naish (note 16) p.204.
45. *MCDP 1-3: Tactics* (US Marine Corps 1997) pp.57–78.
46. M. van Creveld, *Air Power and Maneuver Warfare* (Montgomery, AL: Air UP 1994) p.3; Leonhard (note 2) pp.51, 87–8.
47. D. Bonner-Smith (ed.) *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of St Vincent whilst First Lord of the Admiralty, 1801–1804* (London: Navy Records Society 1922) Vol.I, p.64. Italics added for emphasis.
48. DLLN, Vol.VII, p.241 n.
49. Tracy (note 27) p.13; J. Terraine, *Trafalgar* (Ware: Wordsworth 1998. First published in 1976) p.51.
50. Letter to Fanny Nelson, 1 April 1795, in Naish (note 16) p.204.
51. *Ibid.*; DLLN, Vol.II, p.26.
52. Letter to Alexander Davison, 6 Sept. 1805, DLLN, Vol.VII, p.30.
53. Letter to Alexander Davison, 30 Sept. 1805, *ibid.* Vol.VII, p.56.
54. O. Warner, *A Portrait of Lord Nelson* (London: Chatto and Windus 1959) p.251.
55. Letter to Admiral Lord Gardner, Commander-in-Chief, Ireland, 19 April 1805, DLLN, Vol.VI, p.413.
56. Letter to William Beckford, 31 Aug. 1805, DLLN, Vol.VII, p.22.
57. DLLN, Vol.VII, p.76.
58. Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (note 6) p.225.

59. Ibid. p.214.
60. Ibid. p.47.
61. Ibid.
62. J. Russell, *Nelson and the Hamiltons* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972) p.312.
63. Letter to Alexander Davison, 28 March 1804, DLLN, Vol.V, p.476.
64. Letter to Captain Cracraft, H.M. Ship *Anson*, 4 Oct. 1804, DLLN, Vol.VI, p.217. See also ibid. pp.129, 247.
65. Letter to Lieutenant Harding Shaw, Commanding His Majesty's Brig *Spider*, 28 July 1804, DLLN, ibid. p.118. See also Letter to Captain Ross Donnelly, H.M. Ship *Narcissus*, 14 July 1804, ibid. pp.109–10.
66. Ibid. Vol.VI, pp.271–2.
67. Ibid. Vol.VI, p.489.
68. DLLN, Vol.VII, p.148.
69. Letter to the Right Hon. George Rose, 6 Oct. 1805, DLLN, Vol.VII, p.80.
70. DLLN, Vol.VII, p.148, 251.
71. Cf. J. Callo, *Legacy of Leadership: Lessons from Admiral Lord Nelson* (Central Point: Hellgate 1999) pp.87, 88.
72. Letter to Sir John Acton, 26 Jan. 1805, in *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison (Second Series, 1882-1893), The Hamilton and Nelson Papers, Vol.I: 1756–1797; Vol.II: 1798–1815* (privately printed 1893, 1894) Vol.II, p.253.
73. G. Rothenberg, *The Art of War in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana UP 1980) p.81.
74. Patton (note 20) p.335.

